



Energy and Environmental Affairs

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CHARLIE BAKER
GOVERNOR

KARYN POLITO
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

MATTHEW A. BEATON
SECRETARY

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Drought Conditions Improve in Areas of Commonwealth, Rainfall Deficit Continues Across State

Monitoring of Water Resources to Continue, Indoor Water Conservation by Public Necessary

Media Contact

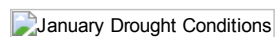
Katie Gronendyke - 617-626-1129 or
katie.gronendyke@state.ma.us

BOSTON – January 6, 2017 – Although many areas of the state experienced some precipitation in December and the early portion of January, large portions of the state continue to experience a water deficit. As a result, Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Matthew Beaton today declared the following drought levels throughout the Commonwealth: a Drought Warning for the Connecticut River Valley, Western, Central, and Southeast Massachusetts, unchanged from the month of December; a Drought Watch for Northeast Massachusetts, down from a Drought Warning in the month of December; and a Drought Advisory for the Cape and Islands, unchanged from the month of December. The declaration was the result of a recommendation issued from a recent meeting of the [Drought Management Task Force](#), comprised of state, federal and local officials, and will remain in effect until water levels return to normal in the affected regions.

"With below average rainfall over the course of the previous month, drought conditions have changed very little as the Commonwealth heads into the start of 2017," **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton**. "We all must continue to administer best indoor water conservation practices to ensure we avoid water sources from becoming stressed and are allowed to rebound faster."

"While recent precipitation has helped to reduce the severity of the drought in parts of the state, drought conditions continue and the public is urged to take steps to reduce indoor water usage," **said Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) Director Kurt Schwartz**. "Recovery from this long-term drought will require both continued conservation measures and above-normal levels of precipitation for the foreseeable future."

A Drought Warning, as outlined in the [Massachusetts Drought Management Plan](#), indicates over six consecutive months of groundwater and stream flow levels being below normal, and larger reservoirs at below normal levels. This initiates a much more concerted set of government responses including instating water restrictions, and more intensified monitoring and coordination between the agencies. Areas within the Drought Warning regions are currently experiencing precipitation levels below normal for six out of seven consecutive months. A Drought Watch represents extremely low groundwater and streamflow levels resulting from prolonged periods of precipitation deficit, including a lack of snowfall in the winter months. The declaration of a Drought Watch warrants detailed monitoring of drought conditions, close coordination among state and federal agencies, and technical outreach and assistance for the affected municipalities. The declaration of a Drought Advisory indicates a level of dry conditions that warrants closer tracking by government agencies.



The state continues to intensely monitor and assess the drought situation, and any associated environmental and agricultural impacts. Furthermore, the state asks the public to be mindful of the amount of water they are using, and to reduce indoor water use, address leaks as soon as possible, and for larger buildings and businesses to conduct water audits to ensure they identify areas of leaks and potential water conservation. All these steps will greatly help reduce water use to ensure essential needs such as drinking water and fire protection are being met, habitats have enough water to recover, and to stretch our water supplies into the spring.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's (MassDEP) permits exempt certain water uses from mandatory restrictions, including: for health or safety reasons; the production of food and fiber; the maintenance of livestock; and to meet the core functions of a business. MassDEP continues to provide technical assistance to communities on managing systems, including assistance on use of emergency connections and water supplies, as well as assisting towns on how to request a declaration of drought emergency.

"Drought conditions have persisted into the winter months, so people should continue to use water wisely," **said Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Martin Suuberg**. "Conserving water within the home, such as fixing leaky faucets, toilets and showerheads, will preserve the supply and save money."

Task Force officials noted that although reservoir levels are recovering during this natural recharge period, most are still below normal. The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) water supply system is not currently experiencing drought conditions, as defined within its individual plan.

"While it's still early in the season, we haven't seen much of a snowpack yet out in the Quabbin area," **said MWRA Executive Director Fred Laskey**. "There are many ways to save water indoors, and we continue to urge residents and businesses to conserve water wherever and however they can."

The declaration of a Drought Warning, Drought Watch, and a Drought Advisory requires the Drought Management Task Force to meet on a regular basis to more closely assess conditions across the state, coordinate dissemination of information to the public, and help state, federal and local agencies prepare any responses that may be needed in the future. The Task Force will next meet in February. For further information on water conservation and what you can do, visit the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' drought [page](#), the Department of Conservation and Recreation's drought management [page](#), and the MassDEP Water Conservation [page](#).

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100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02114-2119 — [\(617\) 626-1000 office](tel:6176261000) / [\(617\) 626 1181 \(fax\)](tel:6176261181)